IMPROVING YOUR CHILD'S READING ABILITY: A HANDBOOK FOR PARENTS OF PRIMARY CHILDREN

MASTER'S PROJECT

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of the Requirements for the Degree
Masters of Science in Education

by

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated with love to my family and friends who helped, supported, and encouraged through the many long hours required to complete this project. Without them, this would not have been possible.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Purpose for the Study

Reading is the key to a child's success in school. Reading ability is a good indicator of whether or not a child will do well in all areas of school work. For the child with reading problems school can become an unhappy place. During the first few years of school when reading difficulties are first identified many parents ask, "What can I do?" Parents want to help their children become better readers but do not always feel confident in their ability to do what is needed.

Teachers and parents have a common goal, which is to give each child the greatest opportunity to reach their potential. Research has shown that parent involvement at home increases educational effectiveness. Teachers need to realize what a valuable asset parental involvement can be to a child's reading development. Parents are an immensely underutilized resourse (Becker & Epstien,1982).

The focus of the first few years of a child's education is on learning to read. These years lay the foundation for reading success. Children who have had a lot of reading experiences prior to entering school have a big advantage over those who have not. Parents can form a partnership with teachers to make learning to read an enjoyable experience. It becomes the teacher's responsibility to

strengthen this relationship between home and school (Edwards, 1992). The teacher can supply parents with the knowledge of how to help their child learn to read. Parents and teachers are sometimes reluctant to increase the degree of parent involvement for a variety of reasons. Parents may lack confidence in their ability to help or feel negative about school from their own past experiences. Teachers may fear parents will be critical of their teaching ability. But, parents and teachers need to become aware that parents can have an impact on their child's reading progress. Teachers need to put into place a structure to support parents as they assist their children in learning to read.

This handbook is written to help teachers give parents guidelines on helping their children improve their reading ability. It can be a link between school and home that can aid parents in becoming more active partners in their children's literacy development.

Problem Statement

The intent of this study is to develop a handbook for use by parents of primary students to aid them in helping their children improve reading ability.

Definition of Terms

Parental involvement is when parents contribute to their child's academic progress (Becker & Epstein, 1982).

Whole language is a philosophy of literacy development in which the primary focus is learning through the meaningful use of language (Anderson, 1994, Strickland & Morrow, 1989).

Whole language/literature-based approach is an educational approach based on the Whole Language philosophy that utilizes children's literature as a starting point in the teaching of reading verses starting with isolated skills (McCaleb, 1994).

Literacy skills include the skills of thinking, listening, speaking, reading and writing (Cooter & Reutzel, 1990).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Reasons Why Parental Involvement is Important To Reading Development

Parental involvement has long been recognized as important to the academic success of children (McCaleb, 1994). Children learn best when home and school share the educational experience (Mehran & White, 1988). Parents and educators have a common goal. This goal is to help each child have the most successful school experience possible. It only makes sense that parents and teachers should work together to achieve this goal. What better time to start this partnership than during the first few years of school when children are learning to read. Developing good reading skills during the primary grades can have lasting benifits for a child.

One reason parental involvement is important is that studies have shown that parental involvement has a positive effect on the academic achievement of students. Anne T. Henderson (1988) reviewed 35 studies pertaining to parental involvement and all had positive findings. It appears that parental involvement in almost any form produces measurable gains in student achievement. There were no negative studies found. Parents can have a highly positive impact on their children's education. The effects appear to persist throughout the students

academic career if the parental involvement is started early (Henderson, 1988, McCaleb, 1994, Bruneau & Rasinski & Shehan, 1991). It appears that getting parents involved can make a critical difference. Greater parental involvement is positively related to improved child achievement (Grimmett,1980).

Parental ivolvement also should be encouraged because it nurtures attitudes and behaviors that are critical to achievement (Henderson, 1988). Parents are a child's first teacher and their most important. They have the most impact on the child's development so it is essential that educators support a good relationship with parents (Potter, 1989). The family provides the primary educational environment for the child (Henderson, 1988). Parents in one study reported that a reading program set up at their school promoted a closer, more understanding relationship with their child (Searls & Lewis & Morrow,1982). Schools need to show respect for families and young children need to know that parents know what is going on at school. Encouraging family participation is the best way teachers can build a child's self-esteem and improve discipline which boosts a child's regard for themselves as learners (Greenburg, 1989). Teachers have found that parental approval of academic behavior is highly reinforcing for the child (Foxx & Foxx, 1986). Academic achievement can be linked to the value placed on education by parents (Searls & Lewis & Morrow, 1982). Children sense the importance that parents place on school and as a result strive to improve their school work (Shuck & Ulsh & Platt, 1983). Parents can also have a positive effect on a child's motivation, confidence, participation in class, discipline, attendance,

and general attitude toward school (Henderson, 1988, Kirby, 1992, Potter, 1989). The result of parental involvement is more effective schools. Schools with higher levels of achievement have more parental involvement and it is absolutly fundamental to a healthy school system (Henderson, 1988).

Another reason parental involvement is important is that it can aid in renewing the public's faith in the school system. In resent years the public has developed negative feelings about schools. Approaches to learning have changed and most parents lack an understanding of what is going on in schools and why. This is especially true in the area of reading. In the last 20 years the failure and dropout rate have increased causing concern and a loss of faith in many school systems (McCaleb, 1994). Parental involvement can not only help meet the educational needs of the students but can help renew this lost faith in schools. Parents can gain an understanding of what is going on in school and see first-hand the problems it faces (Searles & Lewis & Morrow, 1982). In this way parents become more willing to support the schools efforts. Parents who are involved with their child's school develop better attitudes toward school and school staff (Henderson, 1988, Searls & Lewis & Morrow,1982). They also become more active in community affairs and often seek more education for themselves (Henderson, 1988).

Parental involvement can take many forms. The most frequently used parental involvement used by teachers are reading programs (Guthrie, 1982, Edwards, 1992, Becker & Epstien, 1982). An important reason for encouraging parental

involvement is that the current whole language approach recognizes that families and home environment play a key role in children's literacy development. Home studies on language acquisition have been the catalyst for the new strategies in learning to read by using the whole language approach (Strickland & Morrow, 1989). According to the whole language theory, teachers, parents, grandparents, and siblings are all teachers (McCaleb, 1994). Since parents play such a crucial role in their children's literacy acquisition it is important to establish a parent/school partnership so parents can be taught about early literacy development. This is necessary because the perceptions of parents on literacy acquisition are not always consistent with the whole language curriculum (Anderson, 1994).

Parents need to become active participants and supporters in creating homes that stimulate interest in reading and writing (Cooter & Reutzel, 1990). Research has shown that children who are read to at home tend to be those who are above average in literacy development (Teale, 1981. Strickland & Morrow, 1989, Edwards, 1992). Teachers need to help parents understand the current literacy research and show them how this research can be translated into practice (Bruneau & Rasinski & Shehan, 1991. Strickland, 1989). Teachers need to move from telling parents that their involvement is important to showing them how to become involved. This can be done by guiding them in specific and appropriate ways to assist in their children's development and learning (Edwards, 1992).

Parents can also play an effective role in remediating their child's reading program. Research by Anderson, Hebert, Scott, Wilkenson, Durkin, and Harrison has shown that children that are not doing well in reading by the end of 1st grade often struggle academically throughout school. They also do poorly on standerdized tests, develop a dislike of school and suffer from low self-esteem (Mehran & White, 1988). Parents can play an important and effective role in remediating their children's reading program (Foxx & Foxx. 1986). Parent involvement can be the key to effective intervention of reading problems (Mehran & White, 1988). Parents need to know that they can improve their child's reading skills (Shuck & Ulsh & Platt, 1983).

Reasons for Reluctance of Parents and Teachers to Increase Parental Involvement

It may seem surprising that given the amount of research supporting the value of parental involvement that parents and teachers would be reluctant to form this partnership. Most people agree that this partnership can play an effective role and should be encouraged. But, the process seems to break down at the implementation stage (Henderson 1988).

One reason that parents may be reluctant to increase their involvement is because of feelings of alienation due to race, age, education, language, or income status (McCaleb 1994). These social differences can make parents feel

intimidated by teachers and administrators (Mavrogenes, 1990). In order to avoid an uncomfortable situation it is easier for them to just stay away from the school setting. In a study conducted by Greenspan, Niemeyer and Seeley, which resulted in the publication *Principal's Speak*, this alienation between home and school was found to be one of the main reasons for lack of parental involvement in schools (McCaleb, 1994).

In addition to social differences parents can feel uneasy because they relate school to their own negative schooling experiences. To these parents any communication from school has a negative association, such as reporting poor performance or behavior (Mavogenes, 1990). If parents harbor feelings of frustration and failure about their own schooling these feelings can be passed on to their children (Greenburg, 1989, Potter, 1989).

Parents may also face personal pressures that leave them little time to be actively involved with their child's education (Marvogenes, 1990, Potter, 1989). Today's families usually have both parents who work outside the home or are single parent homes. Parents lead busy difficult lives that leave little or no time to spend with their children (Greenburg, 1989). But, what parents need to understand is that spending as little as ten minutes a day reading with their child can make a difference (Kirby, 1992). These personal pressures added to a lack of not knowing what to do results in parents who leave the task of educating their children up to the schools. Teachers need to acknowledge that the time at home

is limited and supply parents with activities that require only short periods of work time (Becker & Epstien, 1982).

Another reason parents may be reluctant to participate is their lack of knowledge about the learning process and the new approaches used in the classroom (Potter, 1989, Mavorgenes, 1990, Grimmett, 1980). In whole language the approach is a meaning based holistic approach of teaching reading and writing (McCaleb, 1994). Parents may see little resemblance between this approach and how they learned to read. Parents may have concerns about the lack of skill-based instruction. The potential for miscommunication between parents and teachers can result because the parent's expectations do not match the whole language program being used in most of today's classrooms (Bruneau & Rasinski & Shehan, 1991). Research has shown that many parents hold traditional veiws on learning to read and even highly educated middle and upper class parents still support skills based instruction (Anderson, 1994). In was found in a study conducted by Mavrogenes (1990) that parents are more than willing to help with their child's education, but they don't know how to go about it and would feel they could be of more help if teachers tell them what to do. Teachers need to establish parent/school partnerships so they they can inform parents about early literacy development and give specific suggestions on how they can be actively involved in their child's literacy learning (Bruneau & Rasinski & Shehan, 1991).

Parents may not understand that they play a critcal role in their child's education or may not be aware of the positive effect their involvment can have

(Bruneau & Rasinski & Shehan, 1991). Parents can be a key figure in a child's litercy development. Parents play an important role in laying the foundation for learning to read. Experiences with book are strongly considered in evaluating children's readiness for school (Edwards, 1992). Parents can have a positive impact because children learn best when home and school share the educational experience. Alleviating problems in reading often requires additional resources that are not available in all schools. Parents as tutors is one way to meet this need (Mehran & White, 1988).

Teachers may also be apprehensive about increasing parental involvement. In a study conducted by Becker & Epstien (1982) with 3,600 teachers in Maryland only a few of them initiated interaction with parents beyond what was expected of them. One reason for this apprehension is that some teachers feel threatened by parents and fear criticism of their teaching abilities. In part this is due to the unrealistic expectations society places on teachers (McCaleb, 1994). Teachers may fear criticism of their instructional approach or fear parents seeing them not in total control of their class at all times (Becker & Epstien, 1982). Some of these feelings may be socio-economic in nature. If the parents of students have a higher education or income the teacher may feel inadequate (Greenburg, 1989, Potter, 1989). The most successful parent/teacher programs are the ones that allow parents and teachers to be coeducators without struggling for power (McCaleb, 1994).

Another reason teachers do not strive to increase parental involvement is that teachers may lack confidence in the parents ability to help. Like the fear of critism this to can be socio-economic in nature. Low income parents may be looked down on as unable to meet their child's educational needs (Greenburg, 1989). As a result many teachers feel that education should be left to the trained professionals (Becker & Epstien, 1982, Potter, 1989). They feel that untrained parents will only undermine their teaching (Henderson, 1988). These teachers become so protective of their students and what they do in the classroom that they forget just how much the parents do (Greenburg, 1989).

A complaint of many teachers concerning increasing parental involvement is that it is just one more thing they are being ask to add to their already overloaded schedule. Teachers consider parental involvement a time consuming luxury (Henderson, 1988). They feel they simply do not have the time to increase parental involvement. Some teachers who have attemped parental involvement programs and have not been successful feel the parental response is not worth the effort (Becker & Epstien, 1982).

The reason for most of the negative feeling held by teachers concerning increasing parental involvement is due to a lack of training. How can teachers be expected to carry out what they have not been taught to do? Teacher education institutions give little or no training in the management of parent involvement (Becker & Epstien, 1982, Greenburg, 1989). Teachers lack the guidance necessary to work with all kinds of parents and as a result are sometimes

insensitive to the needs of families. Because of this lack of training many teachers do not reap the rewards for themselves and their students that parental involvement could supply.

Ways to Increase Parental Involvement

The first thing that needs to be done in order to increase parental involvement is to increase the training received at teacher preparation institutions on working with families. For teachers already in the classroom training needs to be supplied in the form of workshops or in-service training. For such an important resource to be ignored in teacher training is doing our communities as a whole a disservice. The need is assumed but teachers are not receiving the training they need (Potter, 1989, Greenburg, 1989, Mavrogenes, 1990). The "National Education Association has embarked on a major effort to train teachers to work more closely with parents." (Henderson, 1988) Until teachers receive the needed training many will not be equiped to utilize the valuabe resource of parent involvement.

Another key to increasing parental involvement is for teachers to recognize their responsiblity as the facilitator of establishing home/school relationships and see this involvement as valuable for themselves, the children and the school (McCaleb, 1992, Potter, 1989). Several studies have found that parent involvement at home does increase educational effectiveness (Becker & Epstien, 1982, Henderson, 1988). It becomes the teacher's job to put into place a structure

that supports parental involvement by first making parents aware that they can have an impact on their child's education (Edwards, 1992, Potter, 1989). Teachers have an obligation to strengthen the home/school relationship because it will benifit students (McCaleb, 1994).

Finally, if parental involvement is to be successful teachers, principals, administrators, and school board members need to become committed to its importance. Enlisting the aid of parents is one way to squeeze more education out of the school budget (Dulaney, 1987, Mavogenes, 1990). However, like teachers, principals, administrators and school board members need to be better informed on ways to impliment successful parent involvement programs and realize what a valuable asset it can be for their school system (Mavrogenes, 1990). It makes sense that such a resourse should be encouraged and every effort should be made to insure that parental involvement is increased. Reaching out to families to promote literacy is one way we can improve our schools for the betterment of all.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Population and Setting. This study was conducted in a private Catholic school located in Columbus, Ohio, Franklin county. The school contains two units each of kindergarten thru eighth grade. The total student population is 461. The school receives a supplemental reading teacher from Nonpublic School Services, a state and federally funded program supervised by Columbus Public Schools. The reading teacher works with first, second, and third grade students referred by the classroom teacher as having reading problems. There are a total of 201 students at these levels. Twenty-six of the students are receiving services from this pull-out service. The information and activities contained in this handbook were prepared to be use by the parents and teachers of the students in this program. The handbook may also be used by those not referred to the program as well as students at other grade levels.

Design

The design of this research project is action research.

Instrumentation

An extensive review of the literature from 1979 to 1994 on parent involvement in the teaching of reading was conducted. This review included, a computer search of related journals, books, pamphlets, and consultations with a children's librarian and primary classroom teachers at the above mentioned school. The researcher's own experience as a first grade teacher and reading specialist were instumental in producing the handbook.

After the collection of the data, the handbook was developed. The handbook is divided into the following sections:

I. Helping Your Child With Reading
   A. Introduction
   B. Understanding Reading
      1. How Reading Works
      2. Miscues
   C. The Developmental Stages of Reading
      1. Emergent
      2. Beginning Fluency
      3. Developing Fluency
      4. Assessment
   D. Reading With Your Child
      1. Strategies That Work

2. Selecting Materials

E. Additional Activities

1. Prereaders

2. Letters

3. Sight Words

4. Comprehension

5. Writing

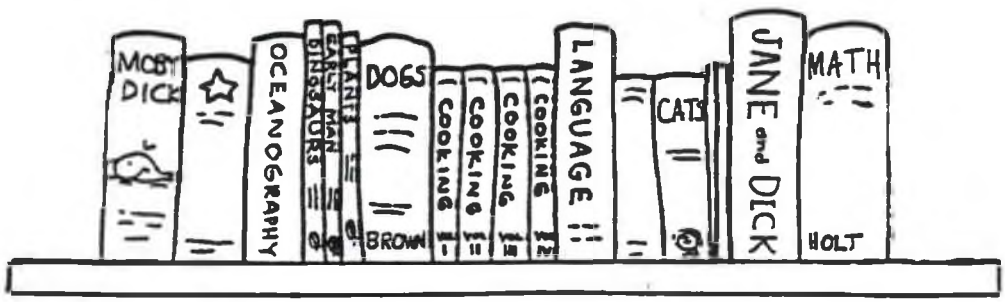
F. Bibliography

CHAPTER IV

HANDBOOK

HELPING YOUR CHILD WITH READING

by Marsha Genteline



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INTRODUCTION

As a parent you are your child's first reading teacher. Long before your child enters school you are getting him or her ready to read. By developing a foundation in speaking and listening you are helping your child in becoming a good reader.

The developmental sequence for learning spoken language also holds true for written language. Your child's early efforts at speech are met with encouragement and focus on meaning rather than form. Since you were successful in helping your child learn to talk you can, in the same natural way, help your child learn written language.

In resent years the way children are taught to read in school has changed. This is due to the research done on the language development of children before they enter school. This research supports the whole language or literature approach to reading. It is based on the philosophy of literacy development in which the primary focus is learning through the meaningful use of language. It utilizes children's literature as a starting point in the teaching of reading verses starting with isolated skills. Understanding or comprehension becomes the primary goal of reading.

This approach may be very different from the way you learned how to read. However, after you understand the principles behind the approach and the

supportive environment it creates you will see that learning to read can be a natural and enjoyable process for you and your child.

There are, for a number of reasons, some children who experience difficulties in learning to read. For these children school can become a very frustrating place. Parents become concerned and do not know what they can do to help their child become a better reader. If your child is experiencing difficulties in reading this handbook will give you some ideas on how you can help, as well as help you better understand the reading process. It may be encouraging to you that Frank Smith (1988), a researcher who has greatly influnced the teaching of reading, states that, "Any child who can see well enough to distinguish one face from another in a photograph and who can understand the familiar language of family and friends has the ability to learn to read."

UNDERSTANDING READING

How Reading Works

It may be surprising but reading is a combination of visual and nonvisual information. If a reader relies to heavily on only the visual information reading becomes a slow and laborous process and meaning is lost. Nonvisual information is what is known before attempting to read. Examples of nonvisual information are knowledge about the subject matter and knowledge of printed language. The reason why nonvisual information is so important is that the brain does not have time to attend to all the information that is encountered in print. As a result all readers read words that they do not see on the page. The brain forces the eye to move quickly, then fills in what the eye does not see by guessing. This guessing or predicting is therefore a big part of reading. A good reader is a good predictor.

Miscues

A reader's guesses sometimes match the print. But, sometimes they do not match what is actually on the page. When this happens it is not called a mistake but a miscue. Someone who has reading difficulties makes guesses that often do not fit the meaning of what is being read. Because they are attending so much to sounding out individual words the poor reader, in many cases, does not realize

that a miscue has occured. Good readers focus on meaning so when a miscue occasionally occures it either does not effect meaning or they realize it has occured and go back and correct their guess. This self monitorting can only occur when a reader is focused on meaning.

Children with reading problems need to understand how reading works. They need to feel confident enough to make guesses and to go back and correct their guesses when they have lost track of meaning. Many problem readers have lost this ability because they are afraid of making mistakes. Their self confidence is low because reading is difficult for them and their fear only makes matters worse. That is why selecting the appropriate reading material is important. Material that is to difficult will only lead to more frustration. While material at your child's level will enable him or her to feel successful and gain confidence in their ability.

THE DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES OF READING

When learning to read children usually go through three different stages of development the first few years of school. Knowing the characteristics of each of these stages will help you understand the process and select materials that will support and encourage advancement. The three stages are emergent, beginning fluency, and developing fluency.

Emergent

Children enter school at different levels of development depending on the extent of their early experiences with books. Most children who enter school are emergent readers. One characteristic of an emergent reader is the use of memory. After hearing a story several times they have memorized some or all of the text. This helps explain why young children have stories they want to hear again and again. They also use picture cues to help tell the story. Books that support this level of development have illustrations that match the text. The text is usually short with only a few words per page. The language is repetitive and predictable. Examples of books at this level are One Hunter by Pat Hutchins and Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? by Bill Martin. These books contain rhyme, rhythm, repetition, and natural language. The illustrations match the text and flow from left to right. There are many books available at this level.

If you still feel unsure about what to look for in a book for an emergent reader ask your child's teacher or a librarian to suggest others.

Beginning Fluency

The next developmental stage is beginning fluency. Children at this level have mastered most of the basic concepts of print. These concepts include reading from left to right, one-to-one correspondence or the concept of words. They also know that print carries a message. They can identify the front cover, title, title page, and indicate where the story starts. They can name letters, give letter sounds, and recognize some sight words. They are beginning to use reading cues in there efforts to read.

There are three different reading cues or strategies, semantic, graphophonic, and syntactic (Sunshine, 1992). Semantics deal with the meaning of words. The word chosen needs to make sense in the story. The graphophonic cues are the relationships between symbols and sounds. This is the one we are most familiar with because it involves sounding out words or phonics. The use of phonics is a very important part of reading, but it is only one component. Often poor readers rely on only this strategy while good readers use all three strategies. The third strategy is syntactic which deals with the grammar and structure of our language. For example the subject-verb-object pattern is common in our language. This knowledge enables the reader to eliminate words that would not fit into an

acceptable pattern. By using all three strategies children have several tools at their disposal.

Developing Fluency

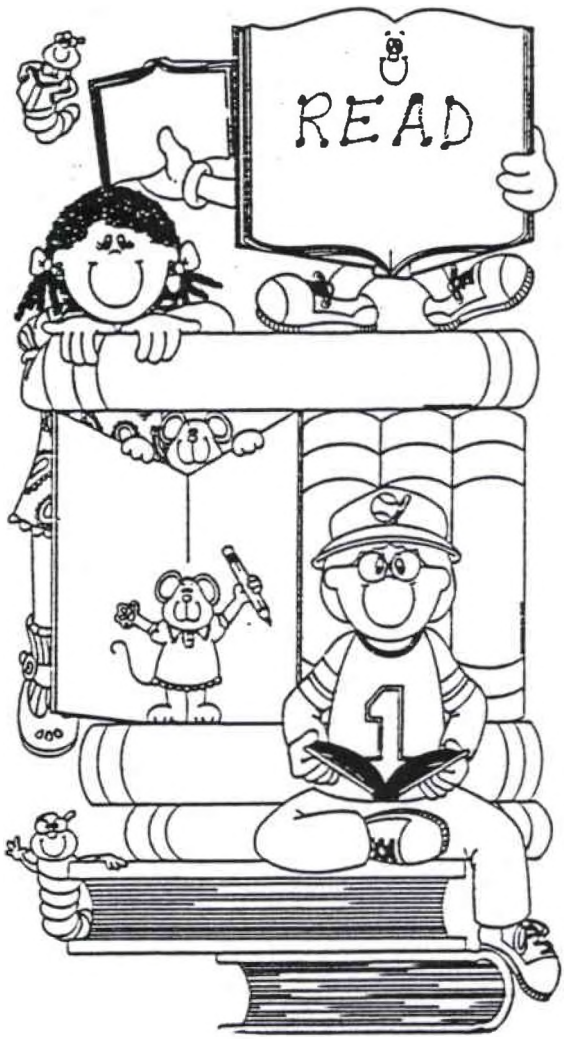
The next stage is developing fluency. Children at this stage are confident readers. They are reading for meaning and are confidently using all three reading strategies when dealing with written language. These children read for enjoyment and information. Most children entering this level are reading beginning chapter books. They are reading independenly and are ready to focus on more advanced subjects such as writing styles, genres, authors, and literary devices (Sunshine, 1992).

Assessment

Now that you are more familiar with the developmental stages of reading you may wonder at what level of development your child is now in. Having this knowledge will better equip you for selecting reading materials and recognizing the areas that need to be strengthened. The following check lists can be useful in determining a child's reading strengths and weaknesses. The lists contain observable behaviors at two levels. The first is emergent literacy behaviors that are most often used by kindergarten and first grade teachers. The second is a list

is of primary grade behaviors most often used by second and third grade teachers. Remember that these are only guidelines and children develop at different rates. No child is expected to know all the items on a given list in order to read.

These checklists are from the book, Complete Reading Disabilities Handbook (1993). For parents of older children an intermediate grade checklist can be found in this book.



EMERGENT LITERACY BEHAVIORAL CHECKLIST

A. Understanding the Terms Used in Reading (Concepts about Print)

1. Is able to locate the title of a book
2. Is able to locate the author of a book
3. Is able to locate the front of a book
4. Understands the concept of a *letter*
5. Understands the concept of a *word*
6. Understands what a *period* and a *comma* are

B. Visual Discrimination and Perception

1. Understands *left-to-right progression*
2. Is able to discriminate between letters such as *a* and *e*
3. Is able to discriminate between letters such as *g* and *q* (reversals)
4. Is able to discriminate between letters such as m and w (inversions)
5. Is able to discriminate between look-alike words as *stop* and *spot*
6. Is able to discriminate between non-look-alike words as *run* and *jump*
7. Is able to complete a jigsaw puzzle of about 15 pieces
8. Is able to recognize word boundries (white spaces between words)
9. Is able to keep his/her eyes on the line
10. Is able to draw an acceptable person with a pencil

C. Auditory Discrimination

1. Is able to rhyme words

3. Is able to discriminate between the different long vowel sounds
4. Is able to discriminate between the different short vowel sounds

D. Letter-Name Knowledge

1. Is able to identify most or all of the lower-case letter names in isolation
2. Is able to identify most or all of the lower-case letter names in context
3. Is able to identify most or all of the upper-case letter names in isolation
4. Is able to identify most or all of the upper-case letter names in context
5. Is able to give the sound of most or all of the consonants
6. Is able to give the sound of most or all of the long vowels (*a,e,i,o,u*)
7. Is able to give the sounds of most or all of the short vowels (*a,e,i,o,u*)

E. Knowledge of Environmental Print (Common Sight Words)

1. Is able to recognize by sight about five to seven words that are commonly found in the daily environment (STOP, McDonalds, Crest, K-Mart, etc.)
2. Is able to recognize his/her own first name
3. Is able to recognize by sight a word the day after it is presented

F. Writing Activities

1. Uses scribbling or letter strings (random letters) to indicate that he/she understands the purpose of writing
2. Is able to use invented spelling on appropriate occasions which require it (writing stories, letters, notes, etc.)
3. Is able to print own first name correctly
4. Is able to copy sight words correctly that he/she can recognize

G. Word Understanding and Listening Comprehension

1. Is able to select the correct meaning for words such as *nest, monster, insect,* or *dinosaur*
2. Is able to understand such terms as *over, under, top*, and *bottom*
3. Is able to pick out a word that does *not* go with a group of four words (classify or categorize as chair, table, *computer*, sofa)
4. Is able to answer questions at different levels (explicit-factual and implicit-interpretive and critical) after listening to a picture storybook or tradebook
5. Is able to retell a picture storybook or a tradebook after listening to it being read

H. Conceptual Ability

1. Has a fairly good imagination (average to that of his/her peer group)
2. Seems to be as "creative" as other members of his/her peer group

I. Oral Language Usage

1. Is able to speak in complete sentences
2. Is able to speak in compound or complex sentences
3. Uses interesting , precise vocabulary
4. Seems to enjoy participating in such activities as sharing time, conversation, role-playing, and dramatic play

J. Laterality

1. Is able to differentiate between left and right hands
2. Is able to differentiate between left and right feet

K. Motor Coordination

1. Is able to walk forward and backward on a balance beam
2. Is able to catch a large ball with ease
3. Seems generally well coordinated when playing games
4. Is able to run, jump, skip, and gallop fairly well
5. Is able to use manipulative materials such as scissors, paste, crayons, markers, and paint brushes fairly well
6. Does not demonstrate perseveration (giving the same response again and again even if incorrect)
7. Has scribbling or handwriting that appears about average with peer group
8. Is able to draw a fairly accurate circle, square, rectangle, and diamond

L. Memory Ability

1. Is able to remember what was just seen
2. Is able to remember what was just heard
3. Is able to remember a letter name, letter sound, or sight word one or several days after it was presented
4. Is able to remember the primary (basic) colors

M. Social-Emotional Adjustment

1. Appears to be appropriately independent, self-reliant, and mature for age
2. Appears to have positive self image
3. Is able to follow simple directions
4. Is able to concentrate on something that interests him/her for a least 10-15

minutes

5. Is able to work and play well with other children
6. Is able to sit still as well as most of the children in the group
7. Has adequate frustration toleration
8. Does not appear excessively fidgety or distractible
9. Appears fairly well organized

(Miller,1993)

PRIMARY-GRADE CHECKLIST FOR OBSERVING READING COMPETENCIES AND WEAKNESSES

I. Word Identification Techniques

A. Sight Word Recognition

1. Is able to recognize most or all of the words on any basic sight-word list
2. Seems to be able to remember a sight word the day after or several days after it was presented
3. While reading orally or silently seems to recognize most of the words encountered on an automatic basis
4. Is able to effectively learn hard-to-retain sight words by using some type of tracing strategy

B. Phonic (Graphophonic) Analysis

1. Is able to provide the sounds of all the consonants and is able to provide a word that begins with each of them
2. Is able to recognize and provide a word containing the common consonant digraphs such as *voiced th, voiceless th, sh, ch, ph,* and *wh*
3. Is able to recognize all of the common phonograms such as *-ack. -all. -ick, -ell, -ill, -in, -en*, etc.
4. Is able to provide the long vowel sounds for *a,e,i,o,u*
5. Is able to provide the short vowel sounds for *a.e.i.o.u*
6. Understands the use of r-controlled vowels

7. Is able to give a word for the hard and soft sound of *c*
8. Is able to give a word for the hard and soft sound of *g*
9. Understands the function of the final *e* marker
10. Understands that *k* is silent in *kn*, that *w* is silent in *wr*, and that *g* is silent in *gn*
11. Is able to give a word containing a diphthong such as *oi, oy, ou*, and *ow*
12. Understands and is able to apply these phonic generalizations:
    a. When there are two vowels together, the long sound of the first is usually heard, while the second is usually silent
    b. When a vowel is found in the middle of a one-syllable word that ends with a consonant, the vowel is usually short
    c. When the same two consonants are together only one is heard
    d. When the only vowel is at the end of a word the letter usually stands for a long sound
    e. When a word contains two vowels, one of which is *final e*, the first vowel is long and the *final e* is silent
13. Is able to blend a series of sounds into a recognizable word

C. Structural (Morphemic) Analysis

1. Is able to add common suffixes such as *-s, -es, -ed, -ing, -ly, -y, -ful, -er, -en, -ness,* and *-less*
2. Understands the basic function of prefixes and can add such prefixes as *un-, in-, re-,* and *dis-* to base words

3. Is able to recognize some less common contractions by sight such as *we'll, you'll, I've, shouldn't, couldn't, wouldn't, o'clock, they've. they'll,* and *they're*
4. Is able to understand the use of possessive suchas *my sister's dress*
5. Is able to divide words of two or more syllables correctly
6. Is able to understand and apply the principle of the *final silent e* while adding a suffix to the base word
7. Is able to understand and apply the principle of *doubling the final consonant* in a short word with one vowel before adding the suffix
8. Is able to understand and apply the principle of changing *y* to *i* before adding the suffix *-es*
9. Usually uses structural analysis skills before applying phonic analysis skills in decoding an unknown word when applicable

D. Contexual (Semantic) Analysis

1. Usually substitutes words for unknown words that make sense in sentence context and that are grammatically correct when reading aloud
2. Usually can pronounce words correctly in context that might not be pronounced in isolated word lists
3. Is able to complete about 80% or more of a cloze exercise with the correct word or synonym at the 2nd or 3rd grade level
4. Is able the complete a contextual analysis exercise correctly at the 2nd

or 3rd grade level in a written form such as the following:

The girl who lived in the woods saw a _____ walking down the road.
money
porcupine
pretty

5. Understands the use of figurative language at a rudimentary level

II. Comprehension Skills

A. Explicit (Literal or Factual) Comprehension

1. Is able to answer explicit (literal, recall, or factual) comprehension questions from material at about the 2nd or 3rd grade level that the child has read for himself
2. Is able to retell a story written at grade level in approximately the correct sequence
3. Is able to orally state the main idea of a story
4. Is able to carry out 3-5 steps of written directions in about the correct order
5. Is able to locate the significant details in a story
6. Is able to locate a directly stated main idea in a paragraph

B. Implicit (Interpretive) Comprehension

1. Is able to answer implicit (interpretive) comprehension questions at about 2nd or 3rd grade level (questions that call for interpreting, inferring, drawing conclusions and generalizations, predicting outcomes, and summarizing)

2. Is able to predict story content effectively before reading and then confirm or disconfirm the predictions during and after reading
3. Is able to orally or in writing summarize a story in one or two sentences
4. Is able to understand and apply simple cause-effect relationships
5. Is able to understand and orally state an author's purpose for writing a story

C. Critical (Implicit) Comprehension

1. Is able to answer questions that call for critical or evaluative responses
2. Is able to distinguish between real and make-believe
3. Is able to understand and recognize the feelings, actions, and motives of story characters with some degree of competence

D. Creative (Script or Schema-Implicit) Comprehension

1. Is able to relate what is read to him/herself
2. Is able to follow up reading in a problem-solving extension activity

III. Study Skills

1. Is able to use a table of contents
2. Is able to locate pages by page number
3. Is able to understand and interpret pictures and simple maps
4. Is able to use these elements of a simplified dictionary: guide words, entry words, and definitions

IV. Oral Reading

1. Seems to enjoy reading orally

2. Uses good expression while reading orally
3. Is able to stay on the correct line while reading orally
4. Does not reread a line or skip a line when reading orally
5. Is able to read in phrases or groups of words instead of word-by-word
6. Observes punctuation while reading orally
7. Does not usually lose his/her place while reading orally
8. Comprehends fairly well when reading orally
9. Appears to have no speech disorders while reading orally

V. Silent Reading

1. Seems to enjoy reading as evidenced by reactions during reading
2. Uses word identification skills well to decode unknown words
3. Comprehends material that is read silently
4. Uses correct posture and book position while reading silently
5. Reads somewhat more rapidly silently than orally
6. Usually avoids lip movements, subvocalization, finger pointing, and head movements while reading silently

READING WITH YOUR CHILD

The most often given advice by teachers to parents of young children is to read with your child. This is encouraged even more for poor readers as a way of improving their reading ability. In most cases the result is the child labors through oral reading while the parent passively listens. It is assumed that this additional practice will have the desired effect. Parents of problem readers often discover that this is not the case. A review done of over forty studies of parents listening to their children read showed that it "may not result in literary gains, particularly for the at-risk readers, unless parents have recieved some training in specific procedures to assist their children during reading sessions" (Toomey, 1993). This study indicates that poor readers may need more than a listening parent to improve their reading skills. Parents need to become active during these listening sessions in order to contribute in a positve way to each reading episode. The parent can become a model of fluent reading while supporting and encouraging their child's efforts. These home reading sessions can change from a chore into an enjoyable sharing if parents become more familiar with the reading process and the shared reading experience. Shared reading is a way to make the most of each reading time you spend with your child.

Strategies That Work

You as a parent can do a great deal to encourage your beginning reader at home. You can help build confidence and enthusiasm for reading by following a few suggestions. Remember to be sensitive to your child's ability and make reading together an enjoyable experience. When your child encounters a word that they do not know:

*Wait 5-10 seconds to give your child an opportunity to figure out an unknown word on his or her own.

*Have your child look at the picture for clues to an unknown word and its meaning.

*Encourage your child to use beginning consonant sounds by reading the sentence again and pronouncing that sound. Ask. "What word with that sound would make sense?".

*Another option is to simply skip the word and read on if meaning is not lost.

*Do not let your child labor long over a word. Just say the word for your child so they can continue.

*At appropriate times ask your child to predict what they think will happen next in the story.

*Remember to praise their efforts.

On the following page is a bookmark that can be cut out and used as a reminder for these tips and prompts.

TIPS FOR UNKNOWN WORDS
for the
READER

1. Look at the picture.

2. Think about what would make sense. ?

3. Read the sentence again and get your mouth ready.

4. Skip the word and read on. ——→ .

5. Try to say more than the beginning letter. Look for chunks you know.

6. Ask for help.

CUT

TIPS & PROMPTS
for the
LISTENER

WAIT - ALLOW DISCOVERY TIME.
(5-10 SECONDS)

When the reader is in difficulty say:

"Look at the picture."
-or-
"What would make sense?"
-or-
"Read it again and get your mouth ready."
-or-
"Skip that word and read on."
-or-
" Is it _____ or _____?"
(Give the reader a choice.)

NOT ALL ERRORS NEED TO BE CORRECTED.
If an error changes the meaning of the sentence, say:
"Try that again."

Fold

(source unknown)

In addition there are things that can be done before, during, and after reading to promote comprehension. Discuss these stratigies with your child at the appropriate times during your reading sessions. These strategies are also benificial to older students.

Before reading- discuss with your child the cover picture, title, and author. Have your child think about what the story will be about and talk about their predictions. Discuss things they may already know about the subject matter and compare it to some of their own experiences. This process will help your child prepare to receive the story in a meaningful way.

During reading- encourage your child to form mental pictures about the story. Suggest that he or she can create a movie in their head. Use the other strategies suggested previously when your child has difficulty with new words. Stop at convenient times and check your child's comprehension with simple questions.

After reading- discuss the story or have your child retell it in their own words. Discuss what they liked most about the story and whether their earlier predictions were correct. Always praise your child's efforts and give specific examples of strategies they used well during reading.

While your child is reading you can encourage him or her to use and think about the reading strategies by the questions you ask. These sample question will help direct your child to thinking about different ways to handle new words.

Strategies	You Say
Semantic (meaning) cues	"Does that make sense?"

Syntactic (structure) cues	"Does that sound right?"
Graphophonic (visual) cues	"Does that look right?"
Confirming	"Were you right?"
	"How did you know?"
Self Correcting	"Good job, you fixed it by yourself!"

(Clay,1979)

There are some other techniques that may be especially helpful to children who are having reading difficulties. These techniques are easily done by parents at home during the shared reading sessions. One of the most useful is the *neurological impress method*. This method involves reading in unison with your child while reading directly into their ear. This can be done by sitting beside your child or sitting them on your lap. Follow the words with your finger while reading. You and the child read at the same time. Read slowly but maintain a speed that models fluent reading. You may be faster or slower at times but maintain a steady speed (Miller,1993). Another method that works well with older readers is the *repeated reading method*. The child simply rereads the same material until he or she can read it fluently. Using a tape recorder helps your child hear their improvement. Both of these methods help to reduce the readers frustration and improve confidence.

By all means do not try to include all these suggestions into a 10-20 minute reading session. Just having them at your disposal to use when needed can improve the quality of each reading session with your child. A better

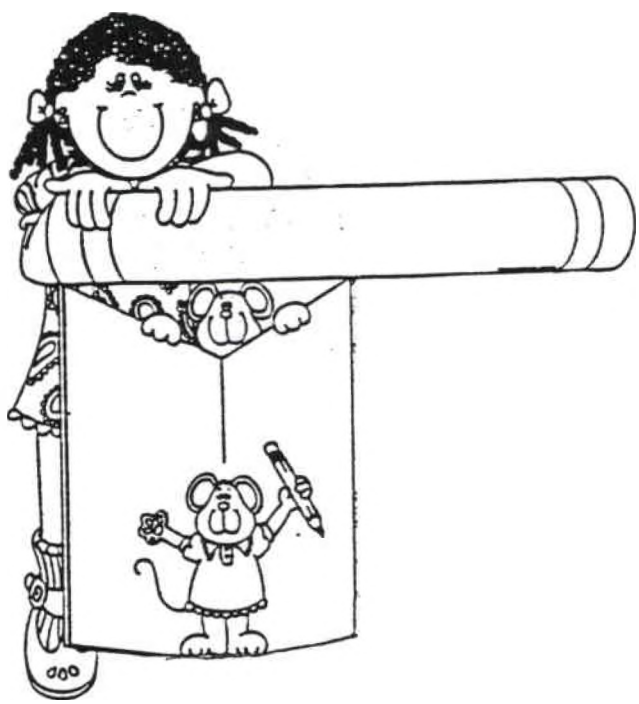
understanding of the reading process and a list of things you can do while reading together will enable you to better support your child's reading efforts.

Selecting Materials

Selecting appropriate reading materials for your child is important. If the material is to difficult your child will become frustrated and loose confidence. Your child's teacher or a children's librarian can be very helpful in finding books that are right for your child. If your child chooses a book that is too difficult you can read the book to them. It will accomplish nothing to have your child struggle through. The "Five Finger Test" is a good way to decide if a book is too difficult. As your child reads a page have them put up a finger each time they do not know a word. If all five fingers are up by the time they finish the page then you both know it is too hard for independent reading.

With the large selection of children's literature available it may seem overwhelming. An excellent place to start when looking for quality literature is the Newbery and Caldecott Medal books. You may have noticed the gold or silver medals on books your child has had in the past. Each year a winner and honor books are selected for the awards. Caldecott books are picture books and Newbery books are novels written for children. These books are selected as excellent examples of children's literature for a given year.

Many first grade classrooms use leveled books from the Reading Recovery Program. Your child may be bringing home these books to share with you. These books start at level 1 and progress in difficulty to level 20. Barbara Peterson (1990) prepared the following list of children's literature that is available at most public and school libraries and follows the same Reading Recovery levels. It can be an excellent way to find books that are similar to the ones your child is reading in school.



BOOK TITLES	LEVELS	AUTHORS
Count and See	1	Hoban, Tana
Growing Colors	1	McMillan, Bruce
My Book	1	Maris, Ron
One Hunter	1	Hutchins, Pat
Cat on the Mat, The	2	Wildsmith, Brian
Have You Seen My Cat?	2	Carle, Eric
Have You Seen My Duckling?	2	Tafuri, Nancy
All Fall Down	3	Wildsmith, Brian
Baby Says	3	Steptoe, John
Little Red House, The	3	Sawicki, Norma Jean
Now We Can Go	3	Jonas, Ann
Toot, Toot	3	Wildsmith, Brian
Brown Bear, Brown Bear What Do You See?	4	Martin, Bill
Rain	4	Kalan, Robert
Roll Over!	4	Peek, Merle
Spots, Feathers, and Curly Tails	4	Tafuri, Nancy
Ball Bounced, The	5	Tafuri, Nancy
Five Little Ducks	5	Raffi
Chick and the Duckling, The	6	Ginsburg, Mirra
Fur	6	Mark, Jan
How Many Bugs in a Box?	6	Carter, David
I Can Build a House	6	Watanabe, Shigeo
Mary Wore Her Red Dress	6	Peek, Merle
Old MacDonald Had a Farm	6	Jones, Carol
Old MacDonald Had a Farm	6	Rounds, Glen
Sam's Ball	6	Lindgren, Barbro
Sam's Cookie	6	Lindgren, Barbro
Sam's Lamp	6	Lindgren, Barbro
Sam's Wagon	6	Lindgren, Barbro
Farmer in the Dell	7	Parkinson, Kathy
Flying	7	Crews, Donald
It Looked Like Spilt Milk	7	Shaw, Charles
Blanket, The	8	Burningham, John
Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed	8	Christelow, Eileen
Henry's Busy Day	8	Campbell, Rod
Oh, A-Hunting We Will Go	8	Langstaff, John
Where's Spot?	8	Hill, Eric
Are You There Bear?	9	Maris, Ron
Cat Goes Fiddle-i-Fee	9	Galdone, Paul
Dear Zoo	9	Campbell, Rod
Grandma and the Pirate	9	Lloyd, David
Gregory's Garden	9	Stobbs, William
Have You Seen the Crocodile?	9	West, Colin
Is Anyone Home?	9	Maris, Ron
Just Like Daddy	9	Asch, Frank
Oh Dear!	9	Campbell, Rod
"Pardon," said the Giraffe	9	West, Colin
Rosie's Walk	9	Hutchins, Pat
SHHHH	9	Henkes, Kevin

Where's My Daddy?	9	Watanabe, Shigeo
Across the Stream	10	Ginsburg, Mirra
Cookie's Week	10	Ward, Cindy/DePaola
Dark, Dark Tale, A	10	Brown, Ruth
Going for a Walk	10	DeRegniers, B.S.
Hooray for Snail	10	Stadler, John
I'm King of the Castle	10	Watanabe, Shigeo
Marmalade's Nap	10	Wheeler, Cindy
Marmalade's Snowy Day	10	Wheeler, Cindy
My Kitchen	10	Rockwell, Harlow
Roll Over!	10	Gerstein, Mordicai
Rose	10	Wheeler, Cindy
Thank You, Nicky!	10	Ziefert, Harriet
William, Where Are You?	10	Gerstein, Mordicai
Bus Stop, The	11	Hellen, Nancy
Cock-a-Doodle Do	11	Brandenberg, Franz
Dinosaurs, Dinosaurs	11	Barton, Byron
Each Peach Pear Plum	11	Ahlberg, Allan/Janet
Sheep in a Jeep	11	Shaw, Nancy
Snail Save the Day	11	Stadler, John
Spot's First Walk	11	Hill, Eric
Ten Bears in My Bed	11	Mack, Stan
Whose Mouse Are You?	11	Kraus, Robert
Baby, The	12	Burningham, John
Big Fat Worm, The	12	Van Laan, Nancy
Carrot Seed, The	12	Krauss, Ruth
Gone Fishing	12	Long, Erlene
Lollipop	12	Watson, Wendy
My Dog	12	Taylor, Judy
"Not Me," said the Monkey	12	West, Colin
One Monday Morning	12	Shulevitz, Uri
Peanut Butter and Jelly	12	Westcott, Nadine B.
Shhhh!	12	Kline, Suzy
Ten Black Dots	12	Crews, Donald
Three Cheers for Hippo	12	Stadler, John
Three Kittens	12	Ginsburg, Mirra
Titch	12	Hutchins, Pat
Buzz, Buzz, Buzz	13	Barton, Byron
Great Big Enormous Turnip, The	13	Oxenbury, H./Tolstoy
If I Were a Penguin	13	Goenell, Heidi
Misty's Mischief	13	Campbell, Rod
One Bear All Alone	13	Bucknall, Caroline
"Quack," said the Billy Goat	13	Causley, Charles
Tool Box, The	13	Rockwell, Anne
Two Bear Cubs	13	Jonas, Ann
Building a House	14	Barton, Byron
Cake That Mack Ate, The	14	Robart, Rose
Come Out and Play Little Mouse	14	Kraus, Robert
Goodnight Moon	14	Brown, Margaret Wise
I Was Walking Down the Road	14	Barchas, Sarah
My Brown Bear Barney	14	Butler, Dorothy
My Cat	14	Taylor, Judy

Put Me in the Zoo	14	Lopshire, Robert
Where Are You Going Little Mouse?	14	Kraus, Robert
You'll Soon Grow Into Them, Titch	14	Hutchins, Pat
Airport	15	Barton, Byron
Are You My Mother?	15	Eastman, P.D.
Don't Touch	15	Kline, Suzy
Fix-it	15	McPhail, David
Hattie and the Fox	15	Fox, Mem
House That Jack Built, The	15	Stobbs, William
Napping House, The	15	Wood, Don/Audrey
Nobody Listens to Andrew	15	Guildfoile, Elizabeth
This Is the Bear	15	Hayes, S./Craig, H.
We're Going on a Bear Hunt	15	Rosen, Michael
Who Took the Farmer's Hat?	15	Nodset, Joan
Who Wants One?	15	Serfozo, Mary
Angus and the Cat	16	Flack, Marjorie
Bear's Bicycle, The	16	McLeod, Emilie
Ben and the Bear	16	Riddell, Chris
Benny Bakes a Cake	16	Rice, Eve
Bertie the Bear	16	Allen, Pamela
Chicken Licken	16	Bishop, Gavin
Fat Cat, The	16	Kent, Jack
Goodnight Owl	16	Hutchins, Pat
Happy Birthday Sam	16	Hutchins, Pat
Henny Penny	16	Galdone, Paul
Just Like Everyone Else	16	Kuskin, Karla
Kiss for Little Bear, A	16	Minarik, Else H.
Leo the Late Bloomer	16	Kraus, Robert
Noisy Nora	16	Wells, Rosemary
Quilt, The	16	Jonas, Ann
Spot's Birthday	16	Hill, Eric
Story of Chicken Licken, The	16	Ormerod, Jan
Teeny Tiny	16	Bennett, Jill
Teeny Tiny Woman, The	16	Seuling, Barbara
There's a Nightmare in My Closet	16	Mayer, Mercer
Three Billy Goats Gruff	16	Brown, Marcia
Trek, The	16	Jonas, Ann
Very Busy Spider, the	16	Carle, Eric
We're in Big Trouble Blackboard Bear	16	Alexander, Martha
Wheels on the Bus, The	16	Kovalski, Maryann
And I Mean It Stanley	17	Bonsall, Crosby
Ask Mr. Bear	17	Flack, Marjorie
Doorbell Rang, The	17	Hutchins, Pat
Elephant and the Bad Baby, The	17	Vipont, Elfrida
Funny Bones	17	Ahlberg, Allan/Janet
Go and Hush the Baby	17	Byars, Betsy
Harold and the Purple Crayon	17	Johnson, Crockett
House That Jack Build, The	17	Peppe, Rodney
Johnny Lion's Boots	17	Hurd, Edith Thacher
Last Puppy, The	17	Asch, Frank
Let's Be Enemies	17	Sendak, Maurice
Little Gorilla	17	Bornstein, Ruth

Little Red Hen, The	17	Galdone, Paul
Max	17	Isadora, Rachel
Meg and Mog	17	Nicoll, Helen
Meg at Sea	17	Nicoll, Helen
Mouse Tales	17	Lobel, Arnold
Stone Soup	17	McGovern, Ann
There's an Alligator Under My Bed	17	Mayer, Mercer
There's Something in My Attic	17	Mayer, Mercer
Three Bears, The	17	Galdone, Paul
Trouble in the Ark	17	Rose, Gerald
Where the Wild Things Are	17	Sendak, Maurice
Blackboard Bear	18	Alexander, Martha
Cat in the Hat, The	18	Dr. Seuss
Charlie Needs a Cloak	18	DePaola, Tomie
Clifford the Big Red Dog	18	Bridwell, Norman
George Shrinks	18	Joyce, William
Jamberry	18	Degen, Bruce
Jimmy Lee Did It	18	Cummings, Pat
Litle Bear	18	Minarik, Else H.
Little Blue and Little Yellow	18	Lionni, Leo
Man Who Didn't Do His Dishes, The	18	Krasilovsky, Phyllis
More Tales of Amanda Pig	18	Van Leeuwen, Jean
Mrs. Huggins and Her Hen Hannah	18	Dabcovich, Lydia
Owl at Home	18	Lobel, Arnold
Sam Who Never Forgets	18	Rice, Eve
Very Hungry Caterpillar, The	18	Carle, Eric
Bear Goes to Town	19	Browne, Anthony
Big Sneeze, The	19	Brown, Ruth
Frog and Toad are Friends	19	Lobel, Arnold
Frog and Toad Together	19	Lobel, Arnold
Mr. Gumpy's Motor Car	19	Burningham, John
Mr. Gumpy's Outing	19	Burningham, John
Surprise Party, The	19	Hutchins, Pat
Three Billy Goats Gruff, The	19	Stevens, Janet
What Next Baby Bear!	19	Murphy, Jill
You Can't Catch Me!	19	Oppenheim, Joanne
Art Lesson, The	20	DePaola, Tomie
Caps for Sale	20	Slobodkina, Esphyr
Chicken Soup With Rice	20	Sendak, Maurice
Gingerbread Boy, The	20	Galdone, Paul
Happy Birthday, Moon	20	Asch, Frank
I Know a Lady	20	Zolotow, Charlotte
Miss Nelson is Missing	20	Allard, Harry
One-Eyed Jake	20	Hutchins Pat
Three Little Pigs, The	20	Galdone, Paul
Tyler Toad and the Thunder	20	Crowe, Robert
Who Sank the Boat?	20	Allen, Pamela
Wind Blew, The	20	Hutchins, Pat

(Peterson, 1990)

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITES

A good way to help your child learn reading skills, and to reinforce the skills that your child has learned is by using reading games and activities. These can be fun for your child and provide you with an opportunity to help them with reading skills in a fun way.

Prereading

When children enter school it quickly becomes obvious which children have had a language rich environment. These children are better prepared to begin reading. Some have even started reading on their own. The most important thing a parent can do is to begin reading to your child in an interactive way as early as possible. Even young infants like to be held and read to. Supply your child with reading materials that are age appropriate, such as cloth and cardboard books for very young children. Model being a reader by letting your child see you enjoying books because most children have a desire to imitate their parents. Setting aside a family reading time where everyone reads is one way to do this. Also suppling your child with many experiences and simply talking with your child can broaden their knowledge base. This will give them a more solid start to reading. Prior knowledge plays a key role in reading for meaning. In addition, there are other

activities that can strengthen skills that are necessary in reading. Improving visual perception is one way to help your child learn to interprete what they see into a meaningful framework. Reading requires the processing of a lot of visual information.

Activities:

Geometric Forms- Have your child trace and copy geometric shapes. Tracing can be done using stencils that you make or buy. Start with simple shapes and progress to more complex patterns such as animal shapes. After the child has mastered tracing these shapes have them attempt producing the geometric shapes on their own. This is a much harder task and will take time to master.

Puzzles- Assembling puzzles is another task that improves visual perception. Start with very simple puzzles that contain only a few pieces and progress to more difficult ones. These puzzles are easy to make by gluing a picture onto cardboard and cutting it into the number of pieces you desire. As your child becomes more proficient these homemade puzzles can be cut into more pieces.

Hidden Pictures- Hidden picture activities encourage your child to look closely at a picture to either find something wrong or locate smaller objects hidden in a drawing. A good book that uses this format is Each Peach, Pear, Plum by Janet and Allen Ahlberg. Many children's magazines and activity books also contain

them. If you are unfamilar with the hidden picture activity one is included in this handbook on the following page.

Commercially Prepared Materials- There are many commercially prepared materials that can aid in improving visual perception. Here are just a few your child may enjoy:

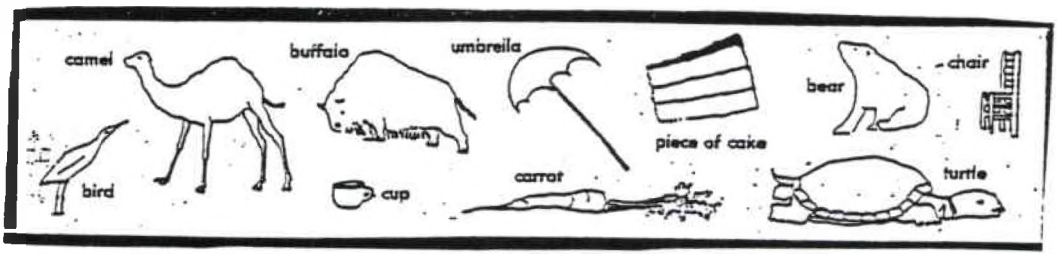
stringing beads	dot to dot pictures
pegboards	coloring books
cut and paste activity books	chalkboards
sewing cards	writing materials

Letters

A child who knows the names and sounds represented by the letters of the alphabet is better prepared for beginning reading.

Activities:

Name Game- A good starting point when introducing letters to your child is using the letters of their name. They will enjoy learning to write and name the letters. Then have them think of other words that start with the same sound.


camel
buffalo
umbrella
chair
bear
piece of cake
bird
cup
carrot
turtle

(Gee, 1975)

Starts Like Game- This is a continuation of the name game. You can play this game anywhere because no materials are needed. It makes an excellent game to play in the car. You say to the child, "Tell me a word that starts like mother." To begin with you can give such hints as:

An animal that likes cheese. (mouse)

Its in the sky at night. (moon)

Soon no clues will be needed as your child understands that many words begin with the same sound. Use all the consonants, but introduce only a few new one each time.

Flashcards- Make a set of flashcards of both the upper and lower case letters These cards can be used in several ways.

*Turn them face down and mix up the cards. Have your child select a card and name the letter. Start with either the upper or lower case letters. Later use both and have your child name the letter as well as identify it as upper or lower case. As they learn the letters have them give a word that begins with that letter.

*Have your child match the upper and lower case pairs.

*You can play a memory game by turning all the cards face down and taking turns looking for pairs.

Magnetic Letters- Magnetic letters can be used to increase letter knowledge. Have your child identify each letter and trace it with their finger while saying its name. The letters can be used to spell their name and simple words.

Tactile Activities- Children who have a great deal of difficulty with learning letters can benifit from tactile activities. The sense of touch may give them the added sensory stimulation needed to remember letters. This can be done by forming letters by gluing yarn, rice, or macaroni in the letter shape on a piece of paper and tracing it with the index finger while saying the letter name. Having your child draw letters in a pan of salt, pudding, sand, or forming letters out of clay or pipe cleaners can also be helpful.

Sight Words

Sight word knowledge is important to reading. Most beginning readers develop a sight word vocabulary easily because they encounter these words every time they read. This repetition is enough for them. Children with reading problems may have difficulty building a sight word vocabulary and need extra help in this area.

Sight words are words that a reader can recognize immediately. There is no need to stop and analyze the word by using reading strategies such as phonics cues or structure cues. Many of the words can not be analyzed in this way because they do not follow regular rules. This makes them difficult for some children. The

most common list of sight words is the *Dolch Basic Sight Word List*, written by Edward Dolch of the University of Illinois. The 220 word list contains approximately 70% of the words encountered in first grade and 65% of those found in second and third grade(Miller, 1993).

The following is a copy of the Dolch list to give you an idea of what words your child should be able to recognize immediately. If your child has problems reading the sight words at his or her grade level extra help in this area could greatly improve their reading ability, since these words make up a large percentage of the words they encounter in begining reading materials. After the list you will find some activities that will reinforce sight words.

Dolch 220 Word List

Pre-primer

1. a 2. and 3. away 4. big 5. blue 6. can 7. come 8. down 9. find 10. for 11. funny 12. go 13. help 14. here 15. I 16. in 17. is 18. it 19. jump 20. little 21. look 22. make 23. me 24. my 25. not 26. one 27. play 28. red 29. run 30. said 31. see 32. the 33. three 34. to 35. two 36. up 37. we 38. where 39. yellow 40. you

Primer

1. all 2. am 3. are 4. at 5. ate 6. be 7. black 8. brown 9. but

10. came 11. did 12. do 13. eat 14. four 15. get 16. food
17. have 18. he 19. into 20. like 21. must 22. new 23. no
24. now 25. on 26. our 27. out 28. please 29. pretty 30. ran
31. ride 32. saw 33. say 34. she 35. so 36. soon 37. that
38. there 39. they 40. this 41. too 42. under 43. want 44. was
45. well 46. went 47. what 48. white 49. who 50. will 51. with
52. yes

First Grade

1. after 2. again 3. an 4. any 5. as 6. ask 7. by 8. could
9. every 10. fly 11. from 12. give 13. going 14. had 15. has
16. her 17. him 18. his 19. how 20. just 21. know 22. let
23. live 24. many 25. of 26. old 27. once 28. open 29. over
30. put 31. round 32. some 33. stop 34. take 35. thank 36. them
37. then 38. think 39. walk 40. were 41. when

Second Grade

1. always 2. around 3. because 4. been 5. before 6. best 7. both
8. buy 9. call 10. cold 11. does 12. don't 13. fast 14. first
15. five 16. found 17. gave 18. goes 19. green 20. its 21. made
22. many 23. off 24. or 25. pull 26. read 27. right 28. sing
29. sit 30. sleep 31. tell 32. their 33. these 34. those 35. upon
36. us 37. use 38. very 39. wash 40. which 41. why 42. wish
43. work 44. would 45. write 46. your

Third Grade

1. about 2. better 3. bring 4. carry 5. clean 6. cut 7. done
8. draw 9. drink 10. eight 11. fall 12. far 13. full 14. got
15. grow 16. hold 17. hot 18. hurt 19. if 20. keep 21. kind
22. laugh 23. light 24. long 25. much 26. myself 27. never
28. only 29. own 30. pick 31. seven 32. shall 33. show 34. six
35. small 36. start 37. ten 38. today 39. together 40. try 41. warm

Activities-

Flashcards- The traditional method for learning sight words is to use flashcards. Print a word on an index card and have your child read the word. Select words from a story they are reading or from the Dolch list. Start with only a few words and add more as your child masters them. Remember to have your child look for these words in the stories they read and write.

Magnetic Letters- Most children have magnetic letters. They can stick on a refrigerator or cookie sheet and children enjoy using them. Have your child spell each sight word from their flashcards. Then have them read the word and use it in a sentence before moving on to the next word. This may take practice with you modeling the activity. This activity will not only help build sight word knowledge but will also help improve letter identification, sentence formation, and oral language.

Throw the Dice- Construct a large dice from cardboard. Choose six sight words and put one on each side of the dice. Take turns rolling the dice, reading the word, and using it in a sentence. This can be a game in itself or use the dice for any game that requires a dice by numbering each word. In order to move the number af spaces indicated the child must do the sight word activity.

Newspaper Word Search- Give your child a list of the sight words he has mastered as well as those he is currently working on. Use any article from a newspaper, magazine, or weekly reader. See how many of the words he can find and circle in ten minutes. This is fun to do as a contest between two people.

Scrambled Word- Write the sight words your child is working on on different colors of construction paper. Use a different color for each word. Cut the letters apart and mix up the letters. Have your child sort and arrange the letters to form the sight words and then use each in a sentence.

Comprehension

It is important to remember that the goal of reading is comprehension. If a child can pronounce all the words but is unable to comprehend what they have read, the process has no value. Many poor readers have difficulty with

comprehension because they focus so much on each word they are unable to read fluently. When fluency is lost so is comprehension. The following activities will help your child focus on meaning.

Activities:

Cloze Procedure- This activity is based upon being able to predict what word should come next. In order to do this the child must understand what they are reading and make good guesses at the missing word. Use a photo copy of a story or an article from a children's magazine or newspaper. You can also use your own writing. Delete every 10th word (more or less to match your child's ability) from the text. You can use white-out or tape to do this. Have your child read the story and think of a word to put into the blank. Do not use a seperate sheet piece of paper for answers. Have your child write directly on the text. It is not necessary for them to use the exact word, it need only make sense. Have your child read the finished product.

Taped Books- An effective technique for children with reading problems is to listen and read along with taped stories. This allows the child to have visual and auditory input. It also gives the reader an excellent model of fluent reading as well as allowing them to focus on meaning rather than word recognition. Many books on tape are available commercially but, it is easy for parents to record their own stories.

Read, Discuss, Reread- Rereading helps clarify the meaning of a story. Have your child read the story, discuss the story, and then reread it. Fluency should improve with multiple readings. To make it more fun and enable your child to hear their own improvement tape record the session. Have your child talk about how he improved and other things he can do to improve even more.

Retelling- After your child has read a story have them retell it in their own words. Tell them before reading that retelling will take place. This gives your child a purpose for focusing on meaning. You may be surprised at what your child thought were the important aspects of the story. This skill will improve with practice.

Self Monitoring- It is important that children learn to monitor their own comprehension. They need to be aware when they have lost track of meaning and what to do to regain it. A good way to teach this skill is have your child stop at the end of each paragraph or page and see if they can summerize what they have just read. If meaning has been lost they will need to reread that section. Good readers are good at moitoring their own comprehension. It is especially valuable in content area reading.

Writing

Reading and writing are activities that naturally go together. In the Whole Language approach speaking, listening, reading, and writing are grouped together as literacy skills that are taught in connection with each other. It would be difficult to seperate them. Writing skills develop in stages that are similar to the developmental stages of reading. Children's first attempts at writing are scribbles. As a child learns about letters they begin using invented spelling to put their ideas on paper. It is important to encourage these first attempts at writing and like in reading the focus should be on meaning rather than form. Conventional spelling will come later. Writing their own stories and then reading them is a good way to develop both reading and writing skills. Responding to stories that are read can increase comprehension, vocabulary, and interest in books. If your child is a poor reader chances are he or she also has poor writing skills. Encouraging your child to write more and using some of the suggested activities can help them to grow as a writer and reader.

Activities:

Functional Print- At a young age children begin to recognize enviromental print. Things like stop signs, the Kroger sign, and McDonald's. This can be extended in your home by, together with your child, making labels for objects in their rooms or around the house. This could include words such as bed, window, wall, chair, etc. Your child will soon be recognizing more and more words and gain the knowledge that print carries a message.

Word Lists and Notes- Leaving simple notes for your child will increase their desire to read and let them see that reading is an important form of communication. You can use drawings to make the notes easier. You may have to read some or all of the note to your child at the beginning. Also, have your child help make a shopping list by copying words from labels. They can also make a list of chores they need to complete. As each item is bought or completed have them locate the word and cross it off the list.

Story Dictation- The early form of story dictation is when an adult writes a word or sentence that the child tells them as a caption to their drawings. After writing their words read them together and then have your child read it independently. This process advances to stories that your child tells that you write down for them. Reading from their own writing helps children learn basic information about the reading process such as:

*Stories have a beginning, middle, and end

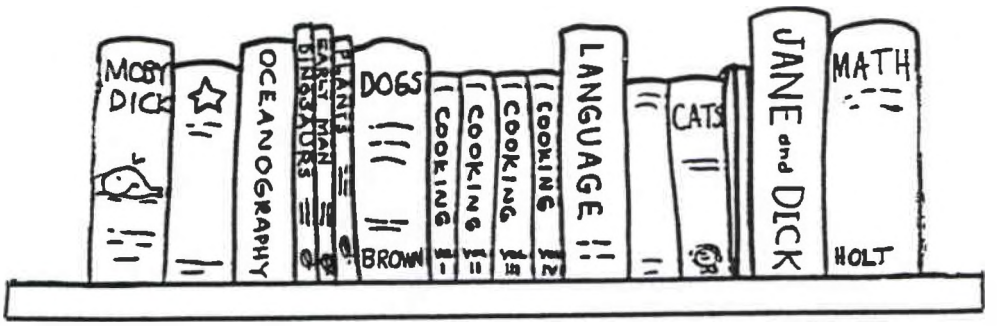
*Things happen in a certain sequence

*Punctuation rules such as capital letters and periods

*Reading is done from left to right

*The concept of word

Book Making- Children as authors is a good way to integrate reading and writing. After reading a particularly good story your child might enjoy making a book similar to it. It could involve retelling the story or changing and extending the book in some way. It could also be a dictated story or one of their own creation. Encourage your child to edit and revise their writing and illustrate their final copy. Add a cover to their pages, include things like title, author, and cover page. Your child will be able to read this book and be proud of their finished product.



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CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Studies have shown that parents can help their children improve reading ability if they are encouraged and supported by classroom teachers. To be effective parents need to understand the reading process and be given specific instructions on reading with their children as well as simple activities that can be easily done at home. With this support parent's can become more capable partners in their child's education.

The intent of this study was to develop a handbook for use by parents of primary students to aid them in helping their children improve reading ability.

An extensive review of the literature from 1979 to 1994 was completed. Books and pamphlets by educators published during this time frame were also reveiwed. Consultations with a children's librarian and primary classroom teachers were conducted. This combination of readings and suggestions from teachers as well as the researcher's own classroom experience resulted in the development of the handbook.

The handbook contains the following five section. Section 1- Introduction, Section 2- Understanding Reading, divided into How Reading Works and Miscues, Section 3- The Developmental Stages Of Reading, divided into

Emergent, Beginning Fluency, Developing Fluency, and Assessment, Section 4- Reading With Your Child, divided into Strategies That Work and Selecting Materials, Section 5- Additional Activities, divided into Prereading, Letters. Sight Words, Comprehension, and Writing.

Conclusions and Recomendations

Reading is the key to a child's success in school and is a good indicator of how well a child will do in all areas of school work. A large part of the first few years of school focus on learning to read. Teachers who are willing to put time and effort into using parents as a resource for their reading programs should find themselves and the children they teach justly rewarded. By using this handbook parents and teachers can become partners in helping children to become better readers. This handbook can be a valuable tool to inform parents about classroom expectations. It gives parents the information needed to make the most of the time spent reading with their children.

The researcher makes the following recommendations as a result of this study:

* An increase in the training received at teacher preparation institutions and in-service programs for classroom teachers on improving school/parent relationships.
* More support from administration to encourage parent involvement in the schools.
* Further research on effective ways to implement parent involvement programs.

* A program that can get the important information of literacy development to parents prior to entering their child in school. Supplying a child with a language rich environment needs to begin as early as possible.

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